

First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney Attends Learning Lab on State Strategies to Reduce Childhood Hunger

Delaware one of ten states and territories selected to participate in learning lab

DOVER, Del. – First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney is leading a Delaware team studying how Virginia has leveraged public-private partnerships to ensure school-age children have regular access to healthy meals.

Delaware was one of 10 states and territories selected by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to participate in a learning lab on state strategies to reduce childhood hunger. Gathered in Richmond Monday and Tuesday, the participating states are learning more about communicating and collaborating to reduce hunger, expanding access to school breakfast, supporting innovation in summer meal programs, and streamlining eligibility determination for free meals.

“[Virginia First Lady] Dorothy McAuliffe has provided inspirational leadership on the issue of childhood hunger, and Share Our Strength and the National Governors Association (NGA) have been tremendous partners in that effort,” said **First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney**. “I’m privileged to be part of the Delaware delegation to this week’s learning lab, along with Aimee Beam from the Department of Education; Ray Fitzgerald, Director of the Division of Social Services; Charlotte McGarry, Programs Director for the Food Bank of Delaware; and Jon Sheehan, Education Policy Advisor.

“We’ve been encouraged by the many ways that efforts already underway in our State align with national best practices, and

I'm so proud to learn from those who have been leading such good work in Delaware. We've also picked up a few ideas from other states, especially our friends in Virginia, and it's exciting to think about how we can, very realistically, build alliances and make progress toward meeting the most basic need of the next generation of Delaware's workforce and leadership. The quality of our schools and the growth of our economy, as well as public health, depend on our success in that effort."

"Neither teachers nor students can be successful when hunger permeates our classrooms and homes," said **Governor Carney**. "Reducing childhood hunger is a moral, educational, and economic imperative."

The Governor has tasked the Delaware team – which includes representatives from the Governor's Office, Delaware Department of Education, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services and Food Bank of Delaware – to develop a comprehensive plan to establish partnerships between districts and charter schools and public-private organizations that will support existing and new initiatives for reducing childhood hunger.

In addition to providing more education and outreach to increase awareness, the team will identify new and innovative ways to increase access to child nutrition programs, specifically for families in rural areas when school is not in session.

Delaware has made progress in recent years. For example, the [Community Eligibility Provision](#) – which allows all children in a school to eat for free if at least 40 percent of its population qualifies – has helped more students across Delaware have the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch at school at no cost. This school year, 115 schools participated in the program, an increase from 96 schools when launched in 2014-15. Delaware is ranked in the top five states for the largest increase in this area.

With the school year ending, the state now is trying to get out the word about the [Summer Food Service Program](#), which aims to provide low-income children nutritious meals when school is not in session. Free meals, which meet federal nutrition guidelines, are provided to all children 18 years old and younger at approved SFSP sites in areas with significant concentrations of low-income children. Last summer, more than 720,000 meals (breakfast, lunch, snack, and supper) were served at more than 350 statewide locations.

“Children who depend on school meals for nutrition during the academic year still have needs when school is out,” said **Secretary of Education Susan Bunting**. “We must continue to provide nutritious food to children in their own communities so they don’t go hungry during the summer months.”

“Ensuring that Delaware children have access to nutritious food has always been a priority at the Food Bank of Delaware,” said **Food Bank of Delaware President and CEO Patricia Beebe**. “We have advocated for alternative models of school breakfast in all Delaware schools, improvements to the summer and after-school meal programs, and to ensure that both at-risk children and their families have access to healthy foods. We know that good nutrition is needed in order for kids to learn, play and grow. 17.3 percent of Delaware children are considered food insecure so there is still much we can do as a state. We are thrilled that Delaware has this opportunity to learn best practices from other states so that we can best serve our most vulnerable children.”

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